STEAM BOAT "PELICAN."

RETURN to an Order of the Honourable The House of Commons, dated 14 March 1851;—*for*,

COPY "of the CORRESPONDENCE on the subject of an Inquest held at *Rotherhithe*, February 26th, 1851, on the Body of an Infant alleged to have Died from Exposure to the Weather on board the Steam Boat 'Pelican,' on her passage from *Cork* to *London*."

Ordered, by The House of Commons, *to be Printed*, 14 *March* 1851.

COPY of the CORRESPONDENCE on the subject of an Inquest held at *Rotherhithe*, 26 February 1851, on the Body of an Infant alleged to have Died from Exposure to the Weather on board the Steam Boat "Pelican," on her passage from *Cork* to *London*.

— No. 1. —

Office of Committee of Privy Council for Trade,
Whitehall, 27 February 1851.

Sir,

I AM directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade, to request that you will call the attention of the Directors of the Cork Steam Ship Company to the accompanying report of an inquest held on the body of a child, who it appears died from the effects of exposure to the inclemency of the weather during a passage from Cork to London, on board the Company's steam ship "Pelican."

I am to request that you will favour my Lords with any observations you may have to offer on the subject of the alleged want of accommodation for deck passengers on board the "Pelican," with reference to the circular memorandum addressed by Captain Denham in August 1849, to the owners of such steam-vessels as were employed in the conveyance of deck passengers.

I am, &c.
(signed) *James Booth.*

L. W. Glover, Esq.
Secretary to the Cork Steam Ship Company.

— No. 2. —

Cork Steam Ship Company, Cork,
1 March 1851.

Sir,

I AM instructed by the Directors of this Company to acknowledge the receipt of your favour of the 27th ultimo, containing report of an inquest on the body of a child, stated to have died from exposure to the weather in the "Pelican" steam ship, hence to London.

In reference to this occurrence, and the desire of the Lords of the Privy Council, that the Directors would communicate any observations they might have to make on the subject, and as regards the alleged want of accommodation, I am desired to state, that although they much regret that a death should have

 occurred

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

occurred on board their vessel, and more especially as reported at the inquest, they trust that no blame whatever can attach to them, the ship, or any servant of the Company.

The "Pelican" was built in Cork at the works of the Company last year, and fitted under the inspection of the Directors for the especial purpose of carrying deck passengers comfortably, safely, and conveniently; being a large vessel of nearly 800 tons builder's measurement, with very high bulwarks, and spar decks, under which fully the number of passengers alleged to have been on board, but which were much overstated, could find comfortable protection and shelter from the weather, should they choose to avail of it: and so confident are the Directors that the arrangements would meet Captain Denham's approval, that they would beg his particular inspection of the vessel at his early convenience. She sails from the Irongate Wharf every alternate Thursday, and in the ordinary course of things, arrives there on the previous Sunday, so, should their Lordships think such an inspection desirable, or the captain feel disposed to make it, there can be no trouble in carrying it into effect.

I am, in conclusion, respectfully to remind their Lordships, that in the best regulated conveyances deaths like that in question do occasionally take place, and that more particularly this is the case with deck passengers by steamers, whom in many instances it is impossible to induce to avail themselves of under-deck accommodation, or shelter, when it is provided for them.

Should any further information on this subject be required, the Directors will be happy to afford it.

I am, &c.
(signed) *L. W. Glover*,
Secretary.

James Booth, Esq.
&c. &c. &c.

3 March 1851.

P.S.—I beg to add, that it was conceived desirable to hold over this letter until an opportunity should have been afforded for speaking to the master of the "Pelican" on the subject, and that it is now ascertained that no person on board the vessel was made acquainted with the death of the child, or required to attend the inquest, which is much to be regretted, as the mis-statements there made could have been easily refuted and explained away.

(signed) *L. W. G.*

— No. 3. —

Office of Committee of Privy Council for Trade,
Whitehall, 7 March 1851.

Sir,

I AM directed by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to transmit to you in original, for your consideration and report thereon, the accompanying letter from the secretary to the Cork Steam Ship Company, having reference to the death of a child, occasioned by exposure to the weather on board the steamer "Pelican," on her passage from Cork to London; and to the alleged want of proper accommodation for deck passengers on board that vessel.

No. 525.

I am, &c.
(signed) *James Booth.*

Captain H. M. Denham, R.N.

— No. 4. —

Sir,

11 March 1851.

THE Cork Steam Ship Company having by letter of the 3d instant, suggested to the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade that I should inspect their screw steamer "Pelican," in respect to her alleged want of proper accommodation for deck passengers, as bearing reference to a reported death of a child on board that vessel on the 20th ultimo, whilst on her passage from Cork to London, and it being signified to me by your communication of the 8th instant, that it appeared desirable that I should act upon the owner's invitation;

No. 525, herewith returned.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

invitation; accordingly I took advantage of the said vessel being in the port of London yesterday, and I have now the honour to acquaint you, for the information of their Lordships, that I find the steam ship "Pelican" is provided with 291 square yards of deck-covered space, and 143 square yards of tarpaulin-covered space, with raised bulwarks of 7 feet height, which, together with a steerage cabin for women and children of 25 yards area, renders her adapted to shelter 612 deck passengers, allowing three persons to every two square yards, as per Rules 3 and 4 of Official Regulations.

It appears that the said vessel brought over on the trip in question 609 deck passengers, being three less than the space was equal to; that the weather was unusually fine for the time of year; that no complaint was heard of during the passage, either by the master, mates, carpenter, or steward in their visits to the passengers; nor were they aware of a death of a child having taken place on board; nor was any one belonging to the vessel summoned to the inquest referred to, although lying in the port of London at the time it was being held.

It is incumbent on me to add, that the accommodation provided by the owners of the "Pelican," and the arrangements made by the master, Mr. Edward Byrne, for the protection and comfort of deck passengers, present a zealous desire to carry out the spirit of the recommendations on the subject to steam-ship owners, as promulgated, through me, by my Lords, under date of 10 August 1849.

I have, &c.

James Booth, Esq.
&c. &c.

(signed) *H. M. Denham,*
Captain, R. N.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit